

**Intro:**

For communion today we return to Leviticus. It's Chapter 3 this time.

Leviticus 3 discusses the *peace offering*. Like the burnt offering and the grain offering, it is an offering made by fire, a *sweet savour* unto the Lord — a *soothing aroma* offering.

The peace offering is perhaps the most precious of all the offerings. I think you will see why as we go through. It speaks to us not only of our sin and our Saviour, but of the wonderful fellowship with God that the Lord's sacrifice enables.

Read Lev 3.

When we read these repetitive instructions, with no interpretation or explanation we find it very difficult to gain any spiritual insight or blessing from them.

As in other offerings, there are varying animals that could be offered: bulls, sheep, or goats.

The regulations are the same for each type of offering. I am going to read a summary from one of my commentaries before we consider the meaning:

“Each paragraph follows the same pattern. Almost identical formulas occur in all of them. They open with, ‘If his peace offering is of ... he must offer a perfect male or female animal.’ Then the different tasks of offerer and priest are specified. The worshipper kills and cuts up the animal, while the priest splashes the blood on the altar and burns specified parts of the carcass. Each paragraph closes with the words, ‘a food offering for the Lord.’”<sup>1</sup>

The key to understanding the meaning of this offering is in the last two verses.

Read Lev 3.16-17

Note: the ‘fat’ of the offering is the Lord's, not to be eaten. The implication is that this offering is one that involves a meal – the worshipper eats the sacrifice after it has been offered.

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<sup>1</sup> Wenham, *Leviticus*, p. 74.

## I. The reasons for offering a peace offering

“Peace offering was an optional sacrifice, which a man could bring when he felt like it.”<sup>2</sup>

### A. The reasons listed

1. Thanksgiving [confession] (Lev 7.11-12)
2. Votive [paying vows] (Lev 7.16)
3. Freewill offering (Lev 22.23 – special class, didn’t demand perfect victim)

### B. The close connection of vow and confession offerings (Ps 56.12-13)

### C. David and a thank-offering of prayer (Ps 54)

## II. The festival of the peace offering

### A. The process of the peace offering

1. The necessity of cleansing (Lev 7.19-21)
  - a. Guilt/sin offerings – atoned for sin
  - b. Burnt offering – complete dedication of person
  - c. Grain offering – dedication of life and possessions
  - d. Peace offering – open fellowship
2. The offering of the ‘fat portions’ (Lev 3.3-4, 9-10, 14-15)
  - a. Fat, bowels, kidneys, liver
  - b. Offered as food to the Lord

Symbolized the emotional center of man, so offering symbolizes the devotion of ‘whole heart’, center of being, best of emotions to God.

3. The priest’s portion
4. The rest to be eaten by the worshipper

Ezekiel indicates that sacrificial system will be restored in the Millennium. Some find this incomprehensible.

- Dispensationalists call it ‘memorial’

<sup>2</sup> Wenham, *Leviticus*, p. 74.

- I call it 'barbecual'

Eating a meal with God, in thanksgiving for his grace

## B. Examples of individual festivals

### 1. Jacob at Bethel

- a. Vow (Gen 28)
- b. Offering (Gen 35.1-4, 9-15)
  - 1) Note cleansing
  - 2) Note thank offering

### 2. Hannah with Samuel (1 Sa 1)

- a. Recall vow
- b. Note sacrifices (1 Sa 1.24-28)
  - 1) Three!! bulls (not three-year old bull as some versions have it)
  - 2) One bull for a burnt offering
  - 3) One bull for a purification offering (purification after child-birth)
  - 4) One bull for peace offering

Think of three bulls – very expensive – very thankful, very devoted.

“Eating meat was a luxury in ancient Israel. All meat came from animals given by the worshipper to God, and now partly given back to the worshipper by God. This symbolized the way God gave back to the worshipper his life to go on enjoying.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Wenham, *Leviticus*, p. 81.

### III. The NT significance of the peace offering

#### A. The meaning of the term 'peace offering'

1. Peace offerings = *shelamim*, from *shalom*.

“Peace in Hebrew means more than the absence of war. True peace means health, prosperity, and peace with God, *i.e.*, salvation. This understanding of the peace offering, accepted by a number of ancient and modern writers, seems to do most justice to the OT evidence.”<sup>4</sup>

2. The peace offering represents the complete wholeness of the man with God

#### B. Parallels to communion

1. Jesus called it the ‘new covenant in my blood’ (1 Cor 11.25); Moses sprinkled the nation with the blood of burnt offering and peace offerings at Sinai, calling it ‘the blood of the covenant’ (Ex 24.8)
2. Both demand cleansing (1 Cor 11.27; Lev 7.20)
3. But in communion we drink the symbolic blood, the part reserved for God
  - a. In OT, the life is in the blood, sacred to God
  - b. In NT, the life is from the blood, saving the soul

In all, there is the joy of blessed fellowship with God.

Some people want the fellowship without the purification. You can’t have it that way.

You need to repent, cleanse your hearts, and turn your life over to God in faith.

- You shouldn’t take communion if you are not a believer, or if a believer you are not in fellowship with God.

<sup>4</sup> Wenham, *Leviticus*, p. 77.

But ...

- If you have faith in Christ ...
- If you have confessed your sins, and are walking in fellowship with him ...

Then turn to Rev 3.20

## Conclusion:

- If you have faith in Christ ...
- If you have confessed your sins, and are walking in fellowship with him ...

Then open the door of your heart and let Jesus sit down with you and have a meal.

A meal of fellowship!

A meal in the presence of God!

A meal 'in remembrance of me!'